Independence of Parliament.

When Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his friends were in Opposition they were much concerned over the appointment of Conservative members to office. It was their complaint that such appointments and the expectations of receiving them, made the members no longer free and deprived the people of their representation.

MR. MULOCK'S STAND.

Mr. Mulock went so far in 1896 as to introduce a bill to make it impossible for members of Parliament to receive appointment. This measure provided that no member of Parliament should be eligible for appointment to any position of emolument in the gift of the Crown during the lifetime of the Parliament of which he should be a member, and until twelve months after the dissolution of that House.

Speaking to the motion for the second reading the present Postmaster General delivered himself of these sentiments:

"Not less than 17 members chosen by the "people were taken from their places in this Par- "liament and put into positions of emolument. "In many of these cases these gentlemen con- "tinued to sit here, pretending to represent their "constituencies after they had ceased to be free "men, after they had ceased to be in the posi- "tion of discharging their duties to their consti- "tuents, and which duty was a permanent obli- "gation imposed upon them. And I am further "told—and this is an additional painful statement "for me to make—that there are at this moment "sitting in this House, a large number of sup- "porters of the administration who have under- "standings with the Government, and who have "had promises made to them by the Government, "that in the near future they would not be called "upon to go back to their constituents giving an "account of their stewardship, but will be placed "in a situation of emolument under the Crown."

Mr. Mulock went on to show that this state of affairs destroyed the usefulness of Parliament, and continued:

"If the Government of to-day can dangle public "offices before their followers and induce a few, "and perhaps an increasing number, to aspire to "these positions instead of representing their con- "stituents here, and exercising an unbiased "judgment and a wholesome influence upon the "administration of the day, they become mere "parasites upon the administration and cease to "voice the opinion of their constituents. Not "only do they do that, but moving among their "colleagues they become as it were corrupting "agencies within their own ranks. So it has "become, in my opinion, a crying disgrace and "Parliament is cast down from its high position. "There is even a worse evil growing out of this "abuse. All through the country the electorate, "noticing these things, are coming to the conclu- "sion that the highest aim a man can have in "seeking public life is that he may, through Par- "liament, find his way into a comfortable position "for life. And thus we have coming into public "life office seekers, place hunters, instead of those "ready to make sacrifice for love of their coun- "try." (Hansard 1886, page 2375.)

WHAT JUDGE LISTER THOUGHT.

Mr. James Lister spoke strongly in support of this motion, saying:

"I take it, no more disgraceful condition of "affairs could be imagined than to see a man "elected by the people of this country to come "here as an independent member, and sit session "after session voting for the Government after "having been given to understand that the "reward of his fealty would be his appointment to "an office of emolument under the Crown. That "is a disgraceful proceeding." (Hansard, 1896, page 2386.

Within five months after these words were spoken the elections had taken place, the Liberal-Conservative Government had resigned, Sir Wilfrid had been asked to form a government, and Mr. Mulock had agreed to become a member of the new administration.

THE LANGELIER BREAK.

Without even waiting until he had taken office, Sir Wilfrid and his proposed colleagues began "to dangle public offices before their colleagues." Under date of July 8, 1896, a fortnight after the elections, Sir Wilfrid wrote this letter to Mr. François Langelier, the newly elected member of Parliament for Quebec Centre:

"This is what I propose: The position of "Lieut.-Governor will be at our disposition at the "end of 1897, and if from now till that time you "are not appointed Judge, I propose to place the "Lieut.-Governorship at your disposal."

Three days later Sir Wilfrid Laurier wrote to Hon. Charles Langelier, brother of François:

"Tell François that I do not wish there should "be any misunderstanding. I wish that my "promise may be considered sacred."

So, according to Mr. Mulock's view, Mr Langelier "ceased to be a free man" and became "a mere parasite upon the administration," which

he supported through the two following sessions of the House. Mr. Mulock and his friends, having thus set in motion among the members "a corrupting influence," proceeded to increase its size and power.

HOW M.P.'s WERE CORRUPTED.

Within three months three members of Parliament were appointed to positions of emolument in order to make places for Ministers who had no seats, and otherwise to further the designs of the Government and of the members themselves. Meanwhile other "corrupting influences" in the shape of members with the promise of office in their pockets, were moving about.

Among the early measures introduced was one to provide a new judgeship in Ontario. It was well understood that this position on the bench was designed for Mr. Lister, who afterwards received it, and who is the same gentleman whose language is quoted above. Mr. Lister not only continued to sit in the House, voting regularly with the Government, but agreed with Sir Wilfrid to take the position of Chairman of a Parliamentary Committee appointed to enquire into the Drummond Railway deal. His name is signed to the majority report commending the whole transaction and clearing Mr. Tarte, Mr. Greenshields, Mr. Blair and everybody else of any blame.

Another member sat and voted through two sessions when it was well known that he was to receive the position of emolument in the gift of Mr. Mulock, which has since been given him.

Still another member of the present Parliament sat and voted, reluctantly it was thought, for the Yukon deal, while a position of great dignity and importance and of large emolument was kept vacant for him.

Within three years from the time that the present Government took office a dozen members of Parliament, all supporters of the Premier, though some of them might not have been tractable followers if their independence had not been undermined, were rewarded with offices of emolument. This is four a year, while according to a statement made by the Premier in May 1900, the average number of members, appointed to office by the Liberal Conservatives during their eighteen years was between two and three each year. This shows Mr. Mulock's capacity for straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.

Down to January 1900, the Laurier Government had made 13 appointments to office, from members of the House who had sat and voted, "pretending to represent their constituencies, after they ceased to be free men." No man can number those "who have understandings with the Government" such as that which was made in writing with the gentleman now known as Mr. Justice Langelier. At least a score are supposed to be in that position. They vote down Yukon investigation. They support the machine. They respond with alacrity to the party whip. And if the Postmaster General is right in his estimate, they are now moving about among the other members as corrupting influences, casting Parliament down from its high position.

The names of all who have the promise of office cannot be given. But here is a list of those who have already entered into their reward.

Name.	Constituency.	Position.	Salary.
Frank Forbes	Queens, N. S.	Judge, C.C.	$2000
G. G. King	Queens, N. B.	Senator	1000
F. Bechard	St John & Iberville	Senator	1000
M. C. Cameron	West Huron	Governor, NWT.	7000
J. Lister	Lambton	Judge	5000
John Yeo	Prince	Senator	1000
J. B. R. Fiset	Rimouski	Senator	1000
C. Beausoleil	Berthier	Postmaster	4000
C. R. Devlin	Wright	Immigrat'n agt.	2000
Dr. Rinfret	Lotbiniere	Inspector of Inland revenue	2500
Joseph Lavergne	Arthabaska	Judge	4000
Frs. Langelier	Quebec Centre	Judge	5000
P. A. Choquette	Moptmagny	Judge	4000

This is a pretty good list for a government which is opposed to the appointment of members of Parliament. Put it is understood to be only a beginning. A large number of appointments are known to be promised and are only awaiting for the end of the Parliamentary term. Meanwhile as Mr. Mulock would observe, if he were not implicated in the offence, these members are "moving about among their colleagues as corrupting agencies" within their own ranks, and persuading the people "that the highest aim a man can have in seeking public life is that he may find his way into a comfortable position."